

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

A275.2
Ex85

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
LIBRARY



BOOK NUMBER

A275.2
Ex85

1672861

*The Role of the Extension Editor
In Improving Public Relations for Agriculture
by
Hadley Read, Extension Editor
University of Illinois

I think everyone agrees that the role of the extension editor relative to agriculture's public relations is the same as that of the college of agriculture. As agricultural editors, our first job is to help interpret and report the new truths in the field of agriculture which are being discovered through research. If we do this job effectively, we will automatically contribute to favorable relationships between agriculture and labor, business, and consumers.

While I can't speak for editors in other States, I can tell you how I think we in the Illinois editorial office can do a better job of working with not only the people in agriculture but with everyone.

(1) People in farming need to do a better job of speaking for themselves. It sometime seems that everyone is speaking for the farmers except the farmers, themselves. To put it another way, agriculture needs to become more articulate. Agriculture needs more of its own people -- farmers and farm homemakers -- who can express themselves in the public forum -- through the news and editorial columns of local newspapers, on the radio, on television, in farm and general magazines. Instead of more people saying, "This is how the farmer thinks and this is what the farmer wants," we also need more farmers saying, "This is what I think and this is what I want."

As editors we can help agriculture to become more articulate. Our greatest opportunity, perhaps, lies with the young people of agriculture -- the boys and girls in 4-H Clubs and in FFA and FHA chapters. Today's young people on the farms can and should become tomorrow's spokesmen for agriculture. We can help them to be better spokesmen.

(2) In Illinois, and perhaps this is true in some of the other States, we have a tremendous opportunity to do a more effective job of telling the story of agriculture through the metropolitan press. This story needs to be told not just to improve the public relations of agriculture but because it is an exciting story which affects the lives of nearly everyone. I am just as interested in seeing the true story of labor and business told through the metropolitan press. If for no other reason, we need to tell agriculture's story because it is there and because we are agriculturalists and we are journalists. If we are not, then we should not be agricultural editors.

(3) There is a need and an opportunity, it seems to me, for agricultural college editors to achieve greater stature as "information statesmen" for

*Summary of remarks as member of panel on improving agricultural public relations, at National AAACE meeting, Omaha, Nebr.

agriculture in our relationships with public media. Media people should be able to look to us, as representatives of the colleges of agriculture, for interpretation of the truths and falsehoods about agriculture which flow into their newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations. But if we are to achieve this coveted position as information statesmen for agriculture, we must make sure we know farm people intimately. Too few of us spend enough time on the farms and in the homes of the farm families of our State. We too often believe that we "know agriculture" because we were born and raised on a farm. If we are to truly represent agriculture, we must make sure we know the people of agriculture as well as we know the members of our own families.

###





